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# ARABS WANT BELT ENCIRCLING ISRAEL

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## Grand Mufti and Other Leaders Their Views on Resettling of Palestine Refugees

Grand Mufti Haj Amin el-Husseini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, and his Arab Higher Committee have started a move to create a solid belt of Palestine Arab settlements around Israel and prevent the moving of refugees away from Jewish borders.

This change of front has come with the present evident collapse of the former insistence by the Arab League, the Arab Higher Committee and the Arab government on the return of Palestine Arab refugees to their original homes under the terms of a 1947 United Nations resolution.

The Arab Higher Committee was the last to demand that the refugees must return to the territory now under Israeli control. This demand not only has been abandoned for practical, as opposed to political, purposes but the Arab Higher Committee and certain Arab spokesmen now are opposed to any return of Palestine Arabs to Israel territory. This change has been brought about by the fact that Israel will accept only a few Arabs into their old homes and that it is better to avoid the impression that the Palestine cause

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been settled by agreement for a few years.

Apparently the United Nations Relief and Works Agency difficulty in getting Grand Mufti Haj Amin to fulfill his promise to make a public declaration in favor of the resettlement of Palestine Arab refugees was concerned with whose refugees are to be settled rather than with the issue of resettlement itself. Strongly nationalist elements apparently are rallying it around the Grand Mufti and the Arab Higher Committee's program for a belt of thickly-settled Palestinians surrounding Israel.

Their dispute with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency now is concerned with the program for moving the mass of refugees to northern Syria, outside the desert but fertile Djazira area in northeastern Syria beyond the desert. The United Nations agency desires a declaration from the Grand Mufti favoring resettlement without specification that refugees must remain within the vicinity of Palestine. Both the Grand Mufti and the Arab Higher Committee have gained considerable prestige as a result of recent events in Jordan, due to the widespread belief—fanciful or not—that the Grand Mufti and Arab Higher Committee have once more shown their strength. The United Nations organization has been forced to deal to a certain degree with the Arab Higher Committee and indirectly with the Grand Mufti because of the evidence of the Arab Higher Committee's strength among the refugees. Another fact guiding the United Nations agency is that the rivals to the Arab Higher Committee are the Communists who are insisting on the implementation of the 1947 United Nations partition resolution.

The Nationalists are vitally interested in agreements such as the former director general, Maj. Gen. Howard Kennedy, made shortly before he retired this summer with a large Syrian landholding and trading company. As reported here,

refugees were to be moved to the area... of the company... was to be provided and each was to receive the ownership of a plot of land. The United Nations would provide the essential facilities: machinery, seed and support until the families became self-supporting.

At present a further scheme to settle some 2,000 refugees just east of Beirut is in the final stages of negotiation. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency would provide rations for a certain period and certain facilities but would not enter directly into an agreement.

In Jordan, 100,000 acres have been offered by landowners. The fertility of this area is being investigated. The program of the relief and works agency calls for the purchasing of land by the government with a grant from the relief agency and the settlement of refugees who would have a purchase right.

An idea of millions by the government cooperative groups and other organizations with grants and aid from the relief and works agency is running the program for direct resettlement through the agency itself. There is a possibility that the Grand Mufti and the Arab Higher Committee itself may seek roles as settlers of refugees, but as soon as possible to the Israel borders.

The shift in the Grand Mufti's policy was apparently connected with the enthusiasm which Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria displayed for the preservation of the independent Kingdom of Jordan, and their strong opposition to the union with Iraq. The Palestinian movement is becoming increasingly predominant in Jordan in which it constitutes not only some two-thirds of the population but is an educated and trained element that is pushing the original Jordanians, largely of Bedouin stock, into the

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